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ABSTRACT

This speech, given at the commencement convocation at Bishop's College concerns black institutions and the black renaissance in America. Following brief opening remarks the author elaborates on the black experience in America, and the attempts of higher education institutions to assimilate blacks into the "white" society in the past. Minority education repudiates this attempted assimilation and strives to preserve the richness, pride, inventiveness, joy, and intensity of feeling of the black race. The author touches on Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, Aid to Developing Colleges, and its importance in helping build black institutions into the fine institutions they represent today. The author then concludes with a plea for the graduates to choose education as a career, especially career education, special education, and preschool education, where the country needs able specialists. (PG)

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BEYOND THE MELTING POT*

By S. P. Marland Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

Commencement speakers have a couple of things in common with TV hucksters, those ingratiating people who sell tooth paste and razor blades: we both tend to over-state the obvious in an overflowery way and we both have trouble holding our listeners. But there is a difference --- you can tune out the huckster, but custom calls for you to hurdle this final barrier, the Commencement Address, before you are wholly credentialled as Baccalaureate legitimates.

I welcome this opportunity so graciously extended to me to share one of the profound moments of your lives. While I have heard many and delivered a fair number of commencement addresses, I never fail to find them a new and warm experience, far from ordinary. And this occasion in particular strikes a deep and solemn note. For I see in you the splendid evidence of the new Nation America is becoming --- a Nation that is painfully but, I believe, firmly and inexorably coming to terms with itself --- reconciling its professed ideals with the real lives of its citizens, putting its actions where its words have been for 200 years.

In the beginning, the authors of the Constitution spoke eloquently about basic rights --- to life, liberty, and the

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pursuit of happiness --- and in that historic moment laid down for successor generations a vision of life so exalted and logical that it must have seemed an unreal dream to contemporaries in their parent lands of Europe who were living in societies of unjust privilege and ungodly oppression that had prevailed for centuries. The trouble was, the ideal life was an unreal dream here, too --- for blacks.

Frederick Douglass spoke the truth about America as it existed on Independence Day, 1852, nearly three-quarters of a century into the brief history of the Republic:

> "What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July?" he asked. "I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity . . . for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy," he concluded, "America reigns without a rival."

Barbarism and hypocrisy. The first more terrible, but the second more enduring, more enduring, more difficult to recognize, and much, much harder to eradicate. In 1952, the year in which many of you were born and a time when we were nearing the dawn of the age of civil rights, a Tuskegee report indicated that, for the first time in 71 years of tabulation, no lynchings had occurred in the United States. Since we are supposed to be the inheritors of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the fact that no blacks were illegally hanged in 1952 was surely no cause for celebration. Perhaps a shamed tear for the past might have been more in order. But 1952 did mark, perhaps, the beginning of the end of that special brand of American barbarism.

But while sheer physical outrage perpetrated against the black minority was no longer officially condoned, national hypocrisy in racial matters continued to thrive. The majority revived the old melting pot theory, always a dubious proposition but one that seemed to promise a solution to the rising aspirations of the minorities, both racial and ethnic, that the majority could live with --- an interesting example of paranoia on a large scale.

Norman Podhoretz has written about his experience in the modern melting pot. In a book called Making It, Podhoretz writes of his days at Columbia College in New York City. "The demand being made on me as a student of Western Culture," he wrote, "was seductively abstract and idealized: 'Become a gentleman, a man of enlightened and gracious mind!' It is not," he continued, "that Columbia was being dishonest in failing to mention that this also meant: 'Become a facsimile WASP!"

Over the years millions of Americans, intent like Podhoretz on making it, have acceded to this debasing demand and done their best to be facsimile WASPs: changing their names, their diets, their religions, and their clothes, shaving their beards and shortening their noses; trying in sum to look like Arrow Collar ads so that they could apply for a job in a bank or membership in a country club without letting slip just how closely their backgrounds were tied to the farms and villages of Eastern and Southern Europe.

It was a false period in our history and could not have lasted. But it has taken the courage of a few groups, notably

the blacks, to lead us out of this swamp of hypocrisy. Charles Silberman comments on this phenomenon in his book Crisis in the Classroom.

"What most black students want," Silberman writes, "is to enter the mainstream of American life and culture without surrendering their sense of identity as blacks. The result is to force colleges and universities to seek answers to what is surely one of the central questions of American life: How to create and maintain a sense of community when that community is composed of groups as well as of individuals."

It can be argued, of course, that blacks couldn't help themselves: they had to repudiate the melting pot because it didn't work for them: they didn't melt. A black man or woman, despite their Anglo-Saxon names, despite their 300-year involvement with an essentially Anglo-Saxon culture in the South, perhaps in some scattered cases despite their own wishes, could never be facsimile WASP's: their skin marked them unmistakably as different and therefore not reducible. We have now come full-circle, because of the courage and insistence of our black citizens, and say no man or woman should be reduced. The melting pot is shattered, and rightly so.

But there is much more to the black renaissance in America than simply color. There is a pride of race, a richness of tradition, an inventiveness, a joy, certainly an intensity of feeling --- all of it richly and proudly black. You have repudiated the futile attempt to seek a homogeneous society, as have the Chicanos, the Orientals, the Indians and, more

recently, many young Americans of ethnic stock who have begun restoring to their names the suffixes their fathers and grandfathers furtively deleted at Ellis Island.

Dr. Benjamin DeMott, in a book called Surviving the Seventies, offers his impression of the new "open experience" desired by blacks: "Their grasp," he writes, "of the meaning of open experience lends a color of dignity. . . Nothing is more striking than that they are truly demanding multiplicity. . . They will not trade off blackness for whiteness. . . will not substitute one simplicity for another. Their aim is to add a new self and participate in a new life with no sacrifice of the old."

This is the new America, and it is an America not only richer in justice and stronger in spirit, but beginning to be faithful at last to its professed ideals of equality because it is no longer ashamed of itself, and no longer asks millions of its citizens to feel ashamed of themselves when they reflect on their origins, or when they look in a mirror. The terrible tyranny of racial hypocrisy, I dare now to believe, appears to be rapidly following barbarism into the annals of our unlamented past.

All of this I can sense with a special intensity here at Bishop College because in choosing to spend your undergraduate lives at Bishop you have reached for that multiplicity of experience Dr. DeMott speaks of and openly expressed your conviction that the black college is where you wanted to be even though the new freedom meant that you no longer had no

other choice. Indeed, we both know how much America needs her black colleges and I am proud that the Federal Government has played a part, increasingly strong in recent years, to help Bishop and other traditionally black institutions not only to continue to exist but to become strong enough to take their place alongside the finest colleges and universities in the land. The black college is black because it chooses to be black, and it knows its mission well.

And yet this period of increasing racial equality has been a paradoxical time for black institutions. All of higher education is economically stressed. Rising costs and over-optimistic expansion in the lush 60's have put many colleges and universities in severe financial straits and driven some, particularly smaller, private institutions, to the wall. But black colleges have been hurt not only by the general economic distress, but also by the very success of the effort to end segregation in previously all-white institutions. Before James Meredith and Arthurine Lucy (only a few short years ago), if a black went to college, he generally went to a black college. Today traditionally black institutions account for only about a third of all blacks enrolled in higher education.

In one sense, the change can be regarded as a good thing for black colleges. They can continue to serve their traditional target populations --- the student --- black and white --- who is screened out of other institutions by reason of academic, economic, or social exclusivity. And surely the black schools can begin now to serve larger numbers of whites who find at

Bishop and places like it a special insight into the development of genuine brotherhood and social understanding that is at once the greatest need and the greatest hunger of our time.

In helping me prepare for these remarks, the staff of Bishop's Office of Development --- the euphemism we use in education for fund raising or academic money grubbing --- thoughtfully provided a booklet entitled A Case for Support of the Black College. The author was clearly unhappy about the level of support the Federal Government was giving black colleges. "A study of Federal funds received by American colleges and universities in fiscal year 1969," the booklet reads, "shows that the traditionally black colleges received $119.5 million, or three percent of the total."

Times have changed and in defense of my own agency, the Education Division of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, as well as the other contributing agencies of the Federal Government, I will take this opportunity to bring the record up to date: Since 1969, both the proportion and amount of Federal funds going to black colleges have increased sharply. In Fiscal 1972, for example, the total received by black colleges was $242 million --- double the 1969 level and representing 5.5 percent of all Federal money going to colleges and universities. Predominantly black colleges enroll approximately 2.4 percent of all college students in the country. Hence, over twice the per capita rate of Federal assistance to higher education is going to black colleges.

Most of this money --- $197 million --- came from HEW, and

most of HEW's share --- $165 million --- came from the Office of Education, my bailiwick. And while most of that figure went for student aid programs, a large measure was devoted to what is certainly the most successful program of higher education institutional assistance ever mounted by the Federal Government. I am speaking of Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, or aid to Developing Colleges. Since the first grants were made in 1966, more than $260 million in Federal assistance has gone to Bishop and hundreds of other similar institutions that are classed as "developing" --- meaning that they do good work in serving their mission but need extra help, particularly cooperative arrangements with other institutions, in order to meet their students' needs more effectively. Title III has filled this need admirably and during the last three fiscal years has channeled nearly a million dollars to Bishop College alone.

But Title III thus far has been a piece-by-piece endeavor, providing funds for specific, discrete components of each institution, such as strengthening curriculums, expanding or developing faculties, or establishing cooperative arrangements among several institutions for shared libraries, staff, programs, and facilities. We intend now to build on this good work with a new effort called the Advanced Institutional Development Program, and I hereby invite Bishop to investigate seriously the possibility of becoming a candidate for long-range developmental assistance under this new program.

AIDP will be broader than the basic Title III effort,

affording each institution selected an increased level of aid for comprehensive development in meeting a set of goals which the college itself establishes as proper for its condition and purpose. But all institutions involved would hold one great goal in common --- finally to lift itself from the developing category so that, whatever population the college serves, it can stand on its own merits among the finest institutions of higher education in America. Those chosen will be very much like Bishop College --- surely with a fine record like Bishop's in the service of generations of students such as yourselves, and with the same strong record of community involvement Bishop has earned with the people of Dallas since the college was transferred here in 1961. Evidence of this strong college-community tie may be found in the fact that, since that year, the citizens of Dallas have given Bishop more than $7 million in support of both program and capital efforts of the college. Support of this kind does not come to private colleges, even in Texas, unless it is earned.

But the fundamental reason for this steady increase in support from Washington for Bishop and other developing institutions is more basic than the quality of any individual program. It goes to the heart of education itself and Bishop has set its individual standards of educational excellence very high indeed. The College has defined its controlling principles as "the infinite worth of human personality, the integrity of academic life, high standards of achievement, and the guidance of personal and social behavior by the values of

the Christian religion."

The policy of the Federal Government during these past five years, under the leadership of President Nixon, is to support and help strengthen institutions that offer values such as these. The country simply must not allow the erosion of resources of such vitality and commitment, even in times of severe budgetary constraints such as we are experiencing. The President's budget, therefore, requests double the funds for developing institutions in FY '74 that were requested in FY '73. Defending pluralism in education is a difficult but necessary exercise these days. We in Washington are attempting to do it through expanding the programs of assistance that Bishop and other developing institutions have found useful and helpful; you who are leaving Bishop today have done it as students and, I hope, will continue to defend the concept of pluralism as graduates. Great universities with thousands of undergraduate and graduate students are a fact of life and useful no doubt for those who find them so. But the smaller, more personal places like Bishop are equally valid and for many young people the only places that make sense. Both the multiversity and the small liberal arts institution fit purposefully within the broad range of American higher education, offering balance, contrast, and a degree of competition which is right and healthy.

What does all this mean to you? I believe it means that you are fortunate --- fortunate to have had the intelligence and the courage to complete with success and, in some cases, with distinction a rigorous course of undergraduate studies; fortunate

in that you have excellent career prospects, either in immediate employment or after future graduate education; fortunate in that you have lived the last four years in a college environment illuminated by the spirit of Christian brotherhood.

But it is inevitable that with good fortune comes a greater share of responsibility --- and your share will be determined according to the ancient but still applicable formula that John F. Kennedy liked to cite --- of those to whom much is given, much is required.

In the loftiest terms, one would hope that you will act responsibly all your lives to protect your newly recognized rights as Americans and as world citizens, that you will turn your education, your intellect, your experience, and all the qualities which society has helped develop in you to the service of humanity --- at the community level, at the state level, at the national level, at the international level.

But let me be less grand, less lofty, more specific. Let me ask you now to be very concretely concerned about education in America. I hope and expect that a good number of you will choose to join Dr. Curry, Dr. McDaniel, myself, and so many more in the profession of education. The field, I admit, is not quite as fertile for newcomers as it was a few years back and you may experience a struggle getting what you want in the way of teaching assignments. But there will always be the need --- and, one way or another, the place --- for those who cannot rest until they work with young minds, the aspiring, and the hopeful.

But I make the appeal to you to care about education even if

life in the classroom has no direct attraction for you. I want you to care about the work of the schools because in so many ways, as we have seen in your lifetimes, the push toward equality, justice, and social progress is most effectively generated in the classroom. Whether as teachers, as taxpayers, as voters, as members of parent groups, as community leaders, as politicians --- it will be up to you to help provide the schools with financial, intellectual, and moral support and, when necessary, with the keen-edged criticism they will always need.

We are trying through several designs to do what we can in Washington --- to draw everyone's attention to the need for a workable system of career education, to continue to advance the country toward the elusive goal of effective learning for the disadvantaged child, to help the three to four million handicapped children who are not receiving the special help they need, to extend the limits of our educational undertaking to preschoolers and to those who are well past the traditional age for classroom instruction but who need that instruction as much as anyone in America. And the illiterate, the unemployed, the underemployed, the dropout, the aimless student --- all these are our concerns. I ask you to make them yours.

For, to repeat a not-very-funny one liner, the Government cannot do it alone. In fact, governmental attempts to concoct and enforce educational reform from the top down have proven to be dubious enterprises at best and expensive failures at worst. No, the force that will energize educational reform, indeed that will make possible reform of any kind, must spring

from the will of the people themselves. Government at all levels can respond to popular initiative, but it cannot call it into being where it does not exist. Your opportunity, one that I sincerely hope you will not take lightly, is to supply a generous part of that initiative.

Walt Whitman said it initially - "Now understand me well--it is provided in the essence of things, that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary."

Thank you for letting me be with you today. I congratulate you and I congratulate all those who have taken a hand in your educational careers thus far. Now, let us get on for there is a lifetime of work ahead of you. --- "and a greater struggle is necessary."

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